

SOME
THOUGHTS
CONCERNING
The Life to Come.
WITH
A
Brief Account
Of the State of
RELIGION,

As it now is in the World.

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SOME

THOUGHTS

The Life of

BRUCE COLUM

of the State of

Religion

As it is now in the World

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Printed in the

THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

OF making many Books there is no end, said the wise Solomon in his time; which hath been since fulfilled in such a degree, and to such a measure, that through the multitude of Books, the intended Good and Benefit of them hath been lost and defeated. For when the Great Truths of GOD have come forth and been published, People have not distinguished, discerned, and known them from the
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ordinary Imaginations and Sayings of other meer Humane Writers. But they have remained hidden, and not understood, Psal. 106. 7. Acts 7. 25. by the Men of this World, and by the outward Worshippers: Yea; they have not been Understood by many of the real Servants of GOD: They having not been so diligent (as in Duty they ought) to seek, Acts 15. 17. and enquire out after all the Appearances and Manifestations of his Truth in the World.

In every Nation (and so in every Sect or Party, however it is called or named) he that serveth GOD and worketh Righteousness (which is a general and comprehensive Speech, and doth include Obedience to all the Words of His Law) is accepted with Him,
Acts

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Acts 10. 34. To each Person which doth this, GOD affords the Knowledge of Himself, and of the Things which pertain to his Kingdom. So that out of the Writings of the People of the several Opinions and Persuasions among us (if that Foundation in them here mentioned doth stand sure) somewhat of GOD and of his Truth may be sought after, and also had by the godly, honest, and understanding Reader. But this is to be attended unto, that as between the Miracles of Moses, and the Inchantments of the Magicians, there is that manifest diversity, That the one does not only much exceed the other; but the first do carry that Power, Evidence, and Demonstration along with them, that the Magicians themselves are forced to confess and acknowledge, This is the Finger of GOD, Exod. 8. 19. So likewise there is not only a manifest diversity

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versity between the Imaginations, Subtlety, and Sophistry of Satan (which have also an outward likeness unto, and imitation of Truth) and the certainty of the Words of Truth themselves, or what Job calls right Words, Chap. 6. 25. But further, there is observed to be a continued Vein of Holiness, and a Spirit of the Fear of the Lord, which runs throughout the Writings of some Men more than others. Here again these are exceeded by others also, who are yet mightier and greater than they in the Kingdom of God, and in the dispensation of his Gospel: For there is a real difference between what is meerly pious and devotional, or those common things, which are universally known, and obvious already; and the making known the Great Truths of God, or those new Things which he doth declare, Before they spring forth, I tell you of them, Isa. 42. 9. Which God doth tell and declare

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ety, declare unto Mankind, by some particular
also Saint or Servant of his.

Now whether I my self shall fall under
the same Imputation which I here tacitly re-
prehend in other Writers; or whether I do
here bring forth out of my Treasury such
Things new and old; which in themselves are
indeed worthy to be made publick; or whe-
ther yet further, I do not express out those
Truths of God (which as it is my Duty
to write, speak, and make known; so it is
the Duty of the People of this my Genera-
tion, to read, hear, and receive into their
knowledge, Rom. 1. 28.) I refer all this
to the spiritual man who judgeth all
things, 1 Cor. 1. 15. in this mean while, as
it will be yet more clearly discerned and de-
termined by God and his Saints at the last
Day.

It hath been observed of John the Evan-
gelist, that in his Gospel he doth set down
and

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and mention what was omitted by the other three Evangelists ; for whereas they all repeat and confirm the same things, he doth record that as to which they are silent ; so it hath been and shall be my constant Method and Resolution, only to publish those useful Truths and weightier Matters of the Law, which have been hitherto omitted (see Mat. 23.23.) in the Books and Sermons of other Writers and Preachers : And tho' I have already employ'd the Press proportionally for one of my Circumstances, Condition, and Years ; yet I shall never be so voluminous as Origen of old (who is reported to have made six thousand Books) or as Tostatus and Richard Baxter of later Times. But as I hope to be accepted of Him, who comes quickly, and his Reward is with him, to give to every man according as his Work shall be, Rev. 22. 12. I know that the Goodness and Worth

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Worth thereof, doth lie not so much in its quantity, as its quality (as a little Diamond is of more value and estimation than a much greater common Stone) so I had rather speak five, or a very few Words with knowledge and understanding, that by my Voice I might teach others also (which may be unto Men to edification, exhortation, and comfort) than ten thousand Words in useless Notions, or rather Imaginations, in meer smooth Language, or in vain-jangling and matters of doubtful disputation; the former of which do divert and turn aside the Mind from the one thing needful; and the latter do rather minister unto strife than unto godly edifying.

This small ensuing Treatise is an essay and endeavour to the only good and right end of seeking the present Peace and future Welfare of men and women; I do therefore write unto them of the common

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Salvation. The Contents and subject Matter thereof may be apprehended from the Title-Page. Where the Failings, Defects, Infirmities, the Sins and Errours of the People are spoken of: This is for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. And tho' perhaps there may not be altogether that exactness of Art, Method, and Connexion (whereof some Scribes have been more curious and careful, than of the Substance of the Things they have delivered) yet herein we have a great part of the Scripture for our ensample, which was given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for things which make us wise unto Salvation, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all Good works, albeit it is not like unto Discourses framed by Art and Man's Devise.

SOME

SOME

THOUGHTS

Concerning the Life to come, &c.

Behold, now are we the Sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, 1 John 3. 2.

CONCERNING this thing of future and endless Life, I have great thought and searching of Heart: My Soul doth thrug within me, when in my Bed I think upon it thoroughly. Now I am as yet in this Life; but when that Moment shall come, in which I must be dislodged from this Body, there succeeds Judgment and Account, and strict requiring for all those Omissions of Good and Duty which I have been guilty of; which are now utterly gone by,

and cannot be retrieved for all eternity. Trial was once had, but now it is over, even as to all the Days and Doings of this Life here upon Earth. Now the Days are passing, and we are as yet in the Flesh; but then they will be all over, and gone, and our Spirits will be removed from hence: Then shall they remember (*Luke 16. 25*) the several Steps and Passages of our Life here on Earth, which at first may seem as faint as the remembrance of a Night-Vision, or of the things which have been lately, or long since past. But they shall be all call'd over again, and appear before us. All the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of the past Life, will remain present before the Soul, and appear more lively, and make yet a greater impression (because then she is to receive accordingly) than when they were first done.

The Word of Instruction which doth arise hence, is, that every thing now should be so done as it will be then wished and desired that it had been done; and this is to strive to the utmost in pleasing and finding acceptance with Almighty God. In what fear should we pass the time of our sojourning! How should we improve every moment of our precious Time, and not suffer the least portion thereof to pass away in unprofitable and vain things! The disproportion between Time and Eternity is vast, and as much greater as between the whole Ocean

and a single Drop ; or as the whole gathering
 of the Waters is to a narrow Gulph, or Stream.
 The Rivers run to the Sea, and in like man-
 ner as soon as we draw Breath, we are gliding
 on 'till we launch forth, and are swallowed up
 into Eternity. The Odds will be as great, or
 rather more exceeding, than when one (who
 was imprisoned in a dark Dungeon, or cub-
 bled up in a narrow close Room) is let out to
 the liberty of the whole Earth : Or like a Swal-
 low (which for a little time was pent up in a
 Cage) is let out again to fly up and down in
 the wide and immense Regions of Air. The
 alteration and Change which will be then
 made upon us, is yet more unconceivable. It
 is not yet appear what we shall be. Now
 we know nothing or but little of the Soul ;
 we shall then perceive nothing besides the Soul.
 Now we are wholly taken up with the Con-
 siderations of the Body, then we shall have nothing
 to do with it. And so though our Bodies do
 but shudder towards the Dust, and then seem to be
 utterly lost ; yet it is not so for ever, for they
 shall be raised up again, and rendered glorious
 and incorruptible. Now we do mind (if not
 only, yet chiefly) things sensible and carnal ;
 but then we shall be wholly taken up with the
 consideration of things spiritual : The whole
 Creation, with all the Things and Works of
 God, will be more clearly manifested before
 us,

us, and understood by us, than they are now, as much as the Understanding of a Man doth exceed and surpass the Conception and Instinct of a Beast. It will be a very great change and renewal of things, now no more to turn to Corruption, nor to be destroyed, nor yet dissolved. But as it is said of *Melchisedeck*, That he *abideth a Priest continually*, Heb. 7. 3. By which Word *Priest*, according to its first institution, is signified the most Sanctified and Holy, and Choice of the People: *And ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and a holy Nation*, Exod. 19. 6. from whence cometh that Word *Clergy*. So in like manner it may be affirmed, when those true Things are erected and set up (whereof the Things heretofore made and now in being are but the figure) when the new Heavens and the new Earth are created which are spoken of in *Isai. 65. 17.* then (if we may so speak after the manner of Men, with much humility, trembling, and reverence, that it may be understood by their Capacities) God hath done his best: *For the new Heavens and the new Earth which I will make, shall remain* (observe that) *before me, saith the Lord, Isai. 66. 22.* This Word *Remain*, doth denote an eternal unchangeable state, or whatever is to last for a time, if it be a thousand or million of Years, that is transitory; for the several parts and portions of Time do pass away, and succeed one another.

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Now there is both Time and Motion, which are relative Terms; and these do point forth unto, as they will be swallowed up at length in the eternal Rest: *The whole Earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing, Isai. 14. 7.* This doth respect and look back unto that Confusion, Desolation, Destruction, Trouble, and Weariness which hath been heretofore on the Earth, when there was fear and weeping. It is before said, *The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from thy hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, verſ. 3.* These former evil things shall be done away, and the contrary good things shall succeed in the room thereof: And though this will in some measure be fulfilled in the latter days on the Earth, when the Sinners (who cause all this evil and trouble) shall be consumed out of the Earth, and the wicked shall be no more, *Pſal. 104. 35.* For in what Prayer the Spirit of Truth doth dictate, is included a Promise that so it shall be. And then the People who inhabit here, shall practice the same Holiness, and live in peace, as in *Jerusalem* which is above, which is the Mother of us all. Which Word *Jerusalem*, by Interpretation is the *Visions of Peace*. Though this will be in a less degree and more imperfect manner, just before the Church on Earth shall be received up, and swallowed into that of Heaven: And it shall then come to

pass, that the whole Creation shall be at rest and quier: They shall sing for joy, and break forth in loud Voices, and everlasting Hallelujahs, as is described in the Revelations: They shall not only be so as to rest and inward peace of Soul and Spirit, but also as to outward Rest and Motion: *The Sun shall no more be thy light by day, thy Sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy Moon withdraw it self; for the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting Light, Isa: 60. 18, 19.* So shall it no more rejoyce as a strong Man to run a Race, nor any longer continue his going forth from the end of Heaven, nor his Circuit unto the ends of it; but the reason of the thing will then also cease, and God Himself will then supply that immediately to his living Creatures and Spirits, which they had before by the means and instrumentality of the inanimate Creatures. There shall be no more any weary Beast; but if these sensitive and irational Creatures, should be raised up also to being and life again, answerable unto, but yet much exceeding that state they were in here, the Ox shall still continue strong to labour, yet all Labour, as to the weariness thereof, shall be done away, both with Men and Beasts, *when these times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, Acts 3. 19.* The Holy Ghost hereby signifying, that they being then more nearly and immediately in

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the presence of God (where is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore) all Refreshing, Content, Satisfaction, yea, all Happiness doth arise from Him, as Waters do flow from the Fountain, Light doth proceed from the Sun, or as Heat doth issue forth from burning fire, to the things that are next unto it.

And therefore we should not so much learn (for the general belief and apprehension thereof, is already ingrafted into the Minds of all Men) as practise this great Diversity, That this Life and Earth is the place where we must meet with Labour and Weariness: But only in the succeeding State and Heaven, there is an utter exemption and perfect freedom from these and the like evil things. From hence we should observe diligently, that when any thing in the Service of God, or in our Way to Heaven, seems harsh, uncomely, or awkward, and we are much against it; yet we should thence in no wise refrain, neglect, or omit it; because it is not only a Temptation to hinder and keep off from the best things, but also there is some inkfirmness and labour in the very nature thereof, which we must resolutely strive against, and do it for all. There is the greatest Opposition against, and Temptation annexed to the best Works, either to neglect or desist, or be idle therein: For except we had
lingered,

lingered, surely we had now returned this second time, Gen. 43. 10. And so except we had loitered or been slothful, so much might have been done, as that such a thing had been performed or finished by this time, or long before. Now the best of Works is the bringing forth, and making known of divine Truths: For Satan hath the greatest wrath, and sheweth forth the most letting against this. He who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way, *2 Theff. 2. 17.* For the Truth doth teach us how we may please God, and obtain his Favour: It doth point and direct us certainly in the several things of this Life, where and how to walk, that we may be all along in the way to Heaven, without going aside to the right hand, or to the left. It is like a Pillar on a Road with written Directions on it, which tell us exactly the way from place to place, as also whither such a By-road or turning aside leads; or like a sure Compass, by which those who go down to the Sea in Ships, and occupy their Business in great Waters, do steer their course: Like the Sun by Day, or the Moon by Night, or as a Light shining in a dark place keeps our feet from stumbling; and by this we are enabled to go whither we intend and would be: So this Beam or Ray of heavenly Light doth conduct us through this dark Vale and perplex Wil-
derness

derness of this World, unto the heavenly Canaan: *And thine Ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn aside to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left, Isai. 30. 21.* Which Word speaks to the Heart that it receives and conceives thereof, in clear and distinct Thoughts; which again may be spoken forth, or written. So that as God directeth such a Saint, or Servant, in all his Ways, he may be able to direct others which are in doubt and perplexity, by the same Word of Instruction wherewith themselves are directed of God, *2 Cor. 1. 4.* And so by the same Word themselves are persuaded, they may persuade others.

We should retire inward, and get within, and give diligent attentive heed unto what God doth reveal and make known there; either concerning his Law, which he would have us to obey, or concerning his Will, which he would have us to do; what are our best, true, substantial, and most significative Thoughts, as they are abstracted from Sin and Passion, and separated from the Cloud of Ignorance. Now because Thoughts are infinite, and Words many, therefore we are not to write down, and publish forth every one that doth arise and proceed forth from the Heart and Tongue, but only such as are new (*Isai. 42. 9.*) and true, more than is clearly known already, or thoroughly

ly understood. And this should be constantly observed in writing of Books; for if all was printed which Thoughts could imagine, or Words diversifie, I suppose that the whole World would not contain the Books which should be written, and they would be all without Good or Benefit. It should be a constant Rule when we write or publish concerning any subject, not to repeat and insert again what hath been already said. And so what new and useful Thoughts do arise concerning this future and endless Life, the same are to be made known. But what doth make us to shrug and be afraid thereof, is the vast importance of the thing, it being a decision for everlasting Happiness or Misery; and then because we have not so lived as we shall wish that we had done; yea, and if it was so done, we shall again desire with unexpressible anguish and earnestness, that we had done better in the several Instances: For we shall then perceive our particular failings, wherein and how we came short of what God required of us, and what we might have done. If we have sinned and done evil, we shall wish that we had never come forth into being. O what self-indignation and bitter reflection will there then be, if we were not imploy'd, whilst in life, about what was proper for us to have done! And when things have in some measure been
done

done rightly, then also will be desires that it had been better, and that we had been more diligent and abounding in the same. To appear before the Great God, and to fly out into the unknown parts of the World; to be launched forth into the vast Regions of Air; and if they are not entred into, yet to have a clearer and nearer prospect of the highest Heavens; and then to find that change and diversity upon it self in all things, over what it was with her in the Body; All this seems fearful and astonishing. Though I had all Knowledge and all Faith, whereby I could remove Mountains, which now intercept and hinder the sight of Eternity, yet I could not deliver the thousandth part thereof, that it may be conceived and apprehended as it shall be then known and experienced. Now the Soul is in Prison, and holden under Fetters and Chains of Flesh; but when the Angel of Death knocks them off, then she breaks forth as Lightning out of a Cloud, and is altogether as quick in her motion. This we may know and be assured of, by the quickness of Thought, and by Sight, the principal Sense and Operation thereof: For our Thoughts will run to and fro, from East to West, from North to South, faster than the Sparks among the Stubble, even in a moment of Time. For so our Eyes reach up unto Heaven at the first opening the Lid there-

thereof; so the Spirit of a Man will, in the twinkling of an eye, waite it self throughout the whole Universe. Besides the quickness of its motion, it is eminent for its tenuity, whereby it will pass through the most firm Bodies. Now the Soul is wrapt up in a small Body, and seems to be little more than nothing; but then it will be exceeding subtle and small, and then it will be gathered up unto the Father of Spirits.

As aforesaid, People will then perceive and remember, that it would be infinitely better for them to have done exactly according to the Will of God, than to have acted at that confusion and uncertainty with which the World goes on now after their own Ways, and in their own Wisdom and Will. It is a frequent form of speech in *Ezekiel*, and in the other Prophets, That when God doth bring his Judgment and Punishment on the Inhabitants of the Earth, then they shall know that the Lord hath not said thus in vain. So when the Reward is to be given, and some are made up among the Lord's Jewels, then shall they return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, *between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not*, Mal. 3. 17, 18. So when this Generation of Men and Women is carried off from the Earth, as the former already are, and as we go off day by day in our several Persons; then we shall return (that is, to the

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proper Understanding of Men) and discern that it would be better to have lived otherwise. The consideration whereof will raise indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish in the Soul for having done evil, because there comes of it punishment, and also loss of an exceeding and eternal Happiness: To what is doubt now and dull apprehension, then will be the greatest certainty and most lively sense that so it would have been.

Let the Heathen be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, &c. Joel 3. 12. By which phrase of *awakened*, we learn that the knowledge of God, and the Christian spiritual Life, is as much beyond that of Heathens and natural Men, as waking is to sleep. And even in serving of God there are proportionable degrees, which do exceed the service of God, according to the common standard and size of the World, as real Action is beyond Dreaming. But then according to Truth, and as it is common to all. This Life, with all its activities, is as much less, and comes short of the future Life, as sleeping now is to waking, or as the absolute death of the Body is to the breathing thereof in sleep; or as fire it self doth exceed the remote and distant heat thereof; or as the light of the Sun shining in its brightness, is much more than the dim light of a Candle. And so the business and employment, with all the other things per-

pertaining to it, do proportionably as much exceed the other. And so the Happiness and Good which God hath prepared for his Creatures, and which he will invest them withal, doth yet seven times exceed the utmost apprehension and thoughts any one hath concerning it. *As we have heard, so have we seen, Psal. 48. 8. (and yet much more abundantly) in the City of the Lord of Hosts, in the City of our God; God will establish it for ever. Selah.* Whereby is denoted a contrariety and diversity to the things here, which are but perishing, and do pass away: *We have thought of thy loving kindness, O Lord, in the midst of thy Temple,* vers. 9. Now this Temple is the World, and accordingly the *Jews* fashioned their outward Temple made with hands, according to the similitude thereof; and the Earth is observed to be placed in the exact midst of the World. So that it is no forced construction, but the very natural meaning thereof. That in this short time we did live and inhabit here on this Earth, we thought of the loving kindness of God; not so much what we were sensible of then, but chiefly what he did intend to do further for his Creatures. It is elsewhere written, *Men's Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth,* Luke 21. 16. So it will be with them who have been ungodly and wicked; but to the good and obedient, it

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is joyful Hope, and comfortable Expectation, either to look after what things are coming on the Earth, or what shall be shortly manifested before them. Day unto Day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night sheweth Knowledge. As every day bringeth forth something that is remarkable of what is done here throughout the World : There is somewhat more, or new, if not in its self, yet in its person, or in the manner and place of acting : So the Servant of God, who is endued with Faith and Knowledge, as every day he makes nearer approaches to the things unseen, so he is in expectation of further knowledge and discovery of them : As the Traveller upon every five or six miles advance, hath a new and fresh Horizon opened unto him ; so in the succession of Days, and Weeks, and Months, and Years, we know more spiritually concerning God, and also more clearly and distinctly concerning the other Life. Sometimes we are upon the Mountains, and then in the Valleys ; our Mind is now pure, lifted up, and dwelling in Heaven ; again it is cast down, and become altogether earthly and sensual. Sometimes we have clearness and brightness of light, then a cloudy day (see Zech. 14. 6.) now there is a glimmering of morning and evening, and then again we are fallen into the darkness of night. It is thus differently with us throughout the several times of our Life, as to our apprehensi-

on of things spiritual and eternal. Sometimes we are clear, and then again cloudy : We are sometimes in the twilight ; yea, we become more dark , and at some times are in utter darkness concerning them. And this doth not so much depend upon set times and seasons, but it happens thus diversly with us as we commit sin ; which makes God forsake and withdraw his Communications from us. Again, when we walk before him in all sobriety, obedience, and duty , as is well-pleasing in his sight, then he doth afford the Communications and Manifestations of himself to us.

Lord, how wilt thou manifest thy self to us, and not to the World ? But there is certainly a different and another Manifestation, whereby God appears and discovers himself to his elect Servants, than as he is apprehended by the generality of the World. Tho' to them it is somewhat hard to discern as much, and trust in him, God doth commonly more shew and manifest himself in time of trouble, both to comfort and uphold the Spirits of his Creatures and Servants, and also to make known unto them how they shall be delivered. This doth seem a foolish, strange, and contrary kind of way, which the worldly Man may despise, and even the experienced Soul will hardly believe it at first ; so hidden are the ways and dealings of God, even of his present Dispensations towards his Creatures. But the future things are much more

more wrapt up in a mystery, and within the veil. Were we as *Ezekiel* was in the Visions of God, or did we, like *Stephen*, *Paul*, and *John*, see the Heavens opened; *And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the Ark of his Testament.* Rev. 11. 19. or if the Skreen of these outward visible things was withdrawn; so that with the eyes of our Understanding being enlightned, we did clearly perceive the inward and spiritual, What are the most great and glorious Cities here on Earth, to that which is *on the sides of the North, the City of the great King*, Plal. 48. 2. What are the Kingdoms and Courts of this World, in comparison of the greatness of God, and to the innumerable company of Angels that are about his Throne; to the thousand thousands that minister to him, and to the ten thousand times ten thousand which stand before him! It is not so much as those little Flies and Insects, which move up and down, and make a small humming and noise in the Air; for tho' now we are so pent up within, and taken up with our Fellow-Creatures, that they are to us in a manner all in all: Yet did we with that God-like part in us (I mean our Souls) ascend up above, and and get out from among them, and thence look down upon the Inhabitants of the Earth, as so many short-liv'd Grasshoppers, then we should conceive of, and know them as they are in their true nature: For the best way to know

any thing as it ought to be known (by which phrase the Apostle doth difference it from that first general apprehension or superficial out-side knowledge which the multitude take up with) is to get out and separate from among our Brethren, and to be as abstracted as ever we can from all sensible things.

And then we should wait some considerable time, before the great and precious Truths do come in. It was usual with the Prophets, when they were consulted upon any great difficulty, or when they were to give a Message of their own accord to the People, to be in a state of silence and retirement, with Prayer and Fasting for some considerable time before. We read that the Word of the Lord came to *Ezekiel* after seven days, to *Jeremiah* after ten days. Again, it is elsewhere said, That it came unto him after many days. And so our selves have found, that when we have been upon the searching out, and contemplation of divine Truth, that the best and most precious Truths, the newest discoveries and such things as we have never thought, heard, or read of before, they do most commonly come into our Mind, after two or three hours attendance upon Meditation, where hath been no manner of hinderance and interruption to the current of our Thoughts, by the intervening of other things, or resorting to other Business. And therefore we should do well herein to beware of one Device of Satan

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That if no answer comes presently from God, or if we do not run on cleverly in the things pertaining to his Kingdom, then he suggests to leave quite off, and not to wait on the Lord any longer. Sometimes we thus lose the coming to the knowledge of such and such Truths concerning the Law and Judgments of God, which would be better unto us than thousands of Gold and Silver; Psal. 119. 72. *More to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold,* Psal. 19. 10. *Receive my Instruction, and not Silver; and Knowledge rather than choice Gold; for Wisdom is better than Rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it,* Prov. 8. 10, 11. The Holy Ghost here making this comparison and preference in these three several places, as he knows what is in Man, what he is inclinable and prone unto; hereby he gives us to understand, That People by seeking after, and by being wholly taken up with the outward things of this Life, (which are all had by Money) do neglect the Knowledge of God, and the Understanding of his Truth, which he doth here most acutely dissuade them from. Again, where any man is gifted and fitted for the Work of the Ministry, or for the bringing out, and making known of the Truths of God unto the World, there all outward things pertaining to Life, or even for the charge and labour of publishing this Truth, should be brought ready to his hand, that he should not

misemploy the least portion of his time from the other holy and more excellent Work, in seeking out, and looking after these lesser things, This is signified by the original appointment of Tithes, to reap where they did not sow, nor bestow the least bodily labour; but the Tenth was set out for them ready, for their immediate use and receiving: And also by that saying of our Saviour Christ unto his Disciples: *Other Men laboured, and ye are entered into their Labours*, John 4. 38. This Doctrine (which we preach not for our selves, but as it is the Commandment and Will of God) is clearly delivered by that Prophet, who there saw and speaks of the Gospel-times, tho' he lived under the Law: *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plow-men and vine-dressers; but ye shall be called the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God*, Isai. 61. 3. 6. Others should provide them Meat and Raiment (contained in the Word *Flocks*, Bread signified by *Plow-men*, and Drink expressed by *Vine-dressers*) in which all the food and nourishment of our Life principally consists: Which others are to get ready for them, whilst they do only offer up Prayers unto God (for the Priests of old time did offer Sacrifice) and are wholly employ'd in the ministration of his Word and Truth. *It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve Tables*, Acts 6. 2. It is no

reason that we should neglect what is alike requisite to come unto eternal Life, to serve the mean necessities of this, tho' the hardship of the World doth force us to misemploy much of our precious time this way.

I have been often troubled and concerned that I should be so cumbred about many things, and perhaps about somethings which were besides the proper End and Work I was sent into this World for to do; or I being somewhat called thereto, yet I have intended too much that point only, or I have mispent too much time therein; so that I should go out of this Life before I had thoroughly thought of the other, and before I had finish'd what I came into this World for to do. How many precious Truths of more latitude, of greater concern, and of more universal use to all Men and Women in the general (which might be of instruction and edification for longer time, and even for the Generations to come; which do also more immediately respect the Church of God, and his elect Servants) might have been brought forth and published, instead of a lesser matter of a National Revolution, which was done by a few thereof. And tho' their eternal Salvation was concerned herein (that being to be obtain'd no other way than by keeping the Commandments of God; yet it was not altogether so much relating to the great and common multitude, whose Souls are as highly esteem'd

of God, as the Souls of the rich and mighty People. And then for my laying of divine Truths before them, they laid persecution upon our Loins, which caused disturbance of Mind, and loss of our precious Time. Hereby I came to lose that lovely Awe and Dread, and that sweet Sence of God, which did formerly dwell and abide upon my Soul and Spirit. O that I were as in the days of my youth, when the Secret of God was upon my Tabernacle! Hereby also I became insensible and unbelieving, as to the invisible and future things of God, which heretofore my Heart was always full with the expectation of. I who have heard Words of God, and knew the Knowledge of the Most High, who was always looking after what I shall not see now, and still beholding after what did draw nearer and nearer; yet again there did as it were Scales come over the Eyes of my Understanding, and I became as other ignorant ungodly People. In the multitude, hurry, and confinement of the City, I have not had those pure enlightenings and clear communications of God, as I have had in mine own native Country, and under my Father's Roof; and I have several times desired that I might recover and return to that state again, and not spend my life upon one thing only, which is little more than a continued bringing forth unto trouble. But as I do day by day approach nearer and nearer unto this future Life and Immortality, so whether I sleep

sleep or wake, am busie or idle, my Thoughts may be always thereupon, and be more lively concerning it, and I may be still reaching forth after it. *Looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, 2 Pet. 3. 12.* Whether we do think thereof, or not, we do continually run, yea, and fly towards it. But hereby the Holy Ghost doth teach and instruct us, That tho' we do move so fast towards it, yet we should prevent it in our Thoughts; so we should think more continually and earnestly; as we come nearer in time, and see the day approaching. And this should not be a vain speculation, nor a meer thought only; but we should still be upon the inquiry and examination, *What we must do to be saved?* And that we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that so an entrance may be ministred unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; still making Heaven sure unto our selves; and endeavouring to make it yet more sure.

The Life which I now live, is by faith in the Son of God; and so when God and Christ do act altogether in us, and our whole Business is to please and approve our selves unto them, Religion and our future being is all in all of our Concern, and all our Works and Doings are brought in subordination under that; then we are Servants of God, and Christians indeed. Tho' I have known such after the flesh, yet hence.

henceforth I know them no more; nor yet will I walk after the manner of the flesh, nor after the manner of the world, nor yet after the way of childhood, youth, vanity, or jesting. We should renounce the things that savour of men, nor make mention of them within our Lips. The Holy Ghost saith, by the mouth of *Micah*, *Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted*, chap. 2. 10. This expression is in allusion to Shepherds, who after they have fed one place well and thoroughly with their Flocks, and their feet have trodden, spoiled, or made the Pastures to smell, then they remove to a fresh place and ground: So after we have thoroughly done the Business of Life in such a thing, we should not still stick in that, but press further to the higher and greater Concern. *The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her, round about, they shall feed every one in his place*, Jer. 6. 3. And when they have so done for some time, they take up, and remove to another. It is said in the following Verse, *Wo unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out*. If we have not done our task, nor the work appointed for us whilst we were here on this Earth, our Master in Heaven will call us to an account. *Doth the plowman plow all day to sow*, Hai. 28. 24. This would be too laborious and tiresome; for when the day is far spent, as towards two or three of the clock, he looks up

to the Winter-Sun, and concludes it is time to draw off. Our God hereby doth instruct us to discretion; and teach us, that when a great deal of our life is spent, and the day of immortality is at hand, then let us make the three afore-cited Inferences, *Arise and depart, for this is not your rest.* Which in the language of the Gospel, that brings Immortality to light, speaks on this wise: *The Bridegroom is at hand, go forth to meet him.* Tho' future life and immortality is coming fast enough upon us, yet we should run out before to prevent, meer, and anticipate it. I want Words to express it according to the very meaning, purport, and requiring of the thing. As the Soul is just breaking forth out of this Shell of the Body, into endless life, the Babe should leap in the Womb, and move it self before, yea, and lift and ascend its self up, desiring to be there: And as the Plowman draws off at such a time of day, so we should draw off our Desires, not only from the sin and evil (for we should be perfectly listless and dead as to them), but our desires should be drawn off utterly even from the lawful, necessary, and indifferent things of this World; We should be as if we used them not, temperate in all things, and get above them.

The reason of the different actings of Men, is according to the diversity of the knowledge that is in them; as our Saviour answer'd him, who asked a good thing, and was doubtful whe-

whether he should receive it or not, *According to thy Faith, so be it unto thee.* So as to many future things we are doubtful, in the dark, or blind as towards them; yet as to the attainment of them, all Men act according as their knowledge is: But with some it is imagination or falsehood, when others do apprehend the thing exactly as it is, and according to truth. Each Man doth according to such a number of thoughts within himself. Here again the Rule with some is to do according as the most do, and to walk according to the course of this World; to be guided by the Sayings and Opinions of the People; and by what arises to himself in his next and uppermost thought. Others do make the Word of God their set and constant Rule, and also they are led by the silent and inward Dictates of the Spirit,

Now indeed all the days of a Man's life here on Earth do pass away like a shadow; and so it is as to the good or evil, the conveniency or inconveniency, the comfort or irksomness of them; both is but little, and it soon passeth away: But then at last comes the Judgment of God; and distribution is made to every one of reward or punishment, according to the deeds done in the Body, whether good or evil, true or false: And therefore it is mightily incumbent upon us to see well to it, because that every word and action doth come into reckoning: For according to the deeds
 done

done in the Body, so will God recompence, and so shall we receive; and therefore it behoves us to know and consider before, in whatever we take in hand, or whatever our hand finds us to do, how this will pass in the future examination and trial, and whether it will tend to our benefit or loss at that day. Whatever thy hand finds thee to do, remember the end, and thou wilt never do amiss; keep the Judgment of God always in thine eye, and thou wilt never go much astray. And so it comes to pass, that where some do good, and others do evil, some behave themselves rightly in such a matter, and others behave themselves wrong. It happens thus according to the different measure of knowledge which they have. Moreover, that the Heart be without knowledge, it is not good. This knowledge is branched forth into the things that have been, the things that are, and the things that shall be; how God dealt with his People and Creatures which were before we were born, and who are gone off from the Earth before us; how it is between God and them, who are for a little while breathing here. But more especially the earnest expectation of the Creature should be forward, after those great and good things he will do, after this Earth is dissolv'd, and after the new, eternal, and irreversible state of things is brought in. When he that for about 6000 years has been a turning Man to destruction, doth say again,

Return

Return ye Children of Men, Psal. 90. 3. The first is said in the single number, because now they die severally in their individual Persons one after another. But the resurrection will be in the plural, for they will be all rais'd, and brought up together at once. This will be a change and alteration to a witness (as we use this Phrase in common proverbial speaking) when mortality shall be swallow'd up of life, when this corruption shall put on incorruption, never more to see or turn again unto corruption. This natural Body shall be raised up a spiritual Body; We have not now thoughts to conceive, nor words to express how or after what manner the whole alteration will be; it makes us fear and shrug at the lively and through apprehension thereof. Now we know what we are, but what we shall be after these Bones are turned into dry Bones, and after they shall live again, O Lord, thou knowest; and also how it will be with us, when we shall be caught up into the Air, there ever for to remain with the Lord.

Now because we hope, desire, and would have the best things, whereof both the good and evil are in the hands and disposal of God; therefore our way is to please him, and to get his favour. The things which we do in order to God, that is call'd *Religion*, and it is either worship or obedience. These two subjects, viz. *Some Thoughts of the Life to come, and of the State of Religion as it is now in the World*, are firily join'd together,

gether, because one of them is in order to the other : For the end of every Man's Religion (if he doth understand and practise it aright) is that he may please God, and that himself may be saved. Seeing that it is made known unto him, (both from his own Soul, and from the Book of the Lord, and also from what he hears by the hearing of the Ear) and he believes the same that he must live for ever, he cannot do otherwise than desire to be happy for ever.

This puts Mankind upon their several ways of pleasing and finding acceptance with Almighty God; and they go on according to their own several Opinions, Persuasions, and Congregations. What they do herein, is the hearing of Words, or the offering up of Prayers unto God. It is the Opinion of the Papists, that the Work done, and the bare outward use of the Ordinances, doth conferr Grace, and is acceptable unto God : Others again of the Reformed Religion, do believe that this doth depend upon upon the right intention and good heart of the Worshipper ; which is so in very truth, and according to the *Doctrine* of the holy Scriptures. But still there is a tincture and relick of this kind of Popery remaining at this day among the Protestants ; for they think that they have done a great deal in order to God, by having kept his Ordinances, and because they were continually before him, *Psal.* 50. 7. and they did not omit them at any time. Indeed it was
well

well done herein, and one act of continued duty and obedience unto God; for as on the other side it is a sign of open ungodliness and rebellion, when they refuse to tread God's Courts, so here it is a token of profess'd and visible subjection unto God, when they do diligently and constantly keep his Ordinances, and never omit them at any time.

My self have reason to pray earnestly unto God, that he will not reprove me because my Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings have not been continually before him; I have been forced to neglect his Publick Worship for many Lord's Days successively, lest the Sons of Violence, my Persecutors, who are many in number, should hale me again unto Prison. And so because I have not the benefit of them my self, shall I go about in any wise to depreciate or lessen from that just value and real goodness which arises from them? God forbid. There hath been indeed that tincture of Man's infirmity, who have calculated Religion according to their own circumstances and condition, as to speak somewhat more favourably of the omission of that duty, which themselves did not altogether sit much practice, as again more excusably of that sin which themselves were addicted and given unto. Thus far hath Partiality blinded them, who herein have took part with their own Errors and Corruption. But amidst all this weakness and fault of Man, the Word of God

is very pure ; which doth not vary from her original purity, by any thing that Men would do, or by what they would fasten upon it from their own imaginations. To hide our sin as *Adam*, or to justify or extenuate it, doth make it yet worse and more provoking in the sight of God ; for it is better to lay our hands upon our mouth, and to hold our peace, and to submit unto the mercy and upright *dealing of the Lord*. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer secret communion with God, before the worship of him in the Congregations of his People ; or (as the manner of some is) to relinquish them wholly in order to enjoy, as they say, more private and inward communion with their God, for his publick Worship on his own holy Day, doth take up but three or four hours of the Week, and the residue of their time they might allot for that. When both may stand consistent, and be used successively one in with another, there is no need for one to jostle or have thrust out the other : And let my hand like *Jeroboam's* wither, if I should go about to lay hold on, or hinder the true Gospel-Priesthood in the ministration of their Office in the Temple : For it must be in some place, and it is better in such a place which is set a-part wholly for this, and for no other use : And let my tongue never hold a Pen more, if I should in the least persuade or intimate unto People to neglect the assembling of themselves together. My case is now somewhat like that of *David*, when he was *hunted up and down*

like a Partridge in the mountains. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before God! My tears have been my meat day and night, while they say continually unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy-day, Psal. 42. 1, 2, 3, 4. Then he remembered and call'd to mind what refreshings himself formerly had in the Assemblies; and there it was that he met with God; as God himself doth express it elsewhere, appointing the manner of his Worship, he saith to this purpose: *And there I will meet with thee, and commune with thee*, Exod. 25. 22. In like manner my Soul doth pant and thirst earnestly, that I being once saved and delivered from mine Enemies, and from the hands of all that hate me, might serve him without fear, *in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of my life*, Luk. 1. 74. For this do I desire to live, that I may amongst his People worship God, according to the mind of the Spirit, that I may turn to the People of a pure language, and we may all serve the Lord with one Consent. And tho' there is left in the midst of us at this day an afflicted and poor People, yet they have not that full measure and higher degrees of knowledge and understanding, which were to be wish'd for, and desired; nor yet do they trust in the name of the Lord, as his People, or as them-
selve

selves did of old time. Where are the People now
 upon Earth, who are as diligent and zealous in all
 the parts and seasons of the Service of God; who
 do abound in good Works, and are bold, not
 fearing the face of Man, as they were in former
 days: Or such as those we read of in the *Acts* of
 the Apostles, or in the three first Centuries imme-
 diately after those days. *Look down from Heaven,*
and behold from the habitation of thy Holiness and of
thy Glory: Where is thy zeal and thy strength, and the
sounding of thy bowels, and thy mercies towards us?
are they restrained? Isa. 63. 15. The Prophet here-
 by seems to import as if God had turned his face
 another way, and doth not now behold the Inha-
 bitants of the Earth; and thereupon he prays un-
 to him, to *look down again upon them*, and as if
 God doth now with-hold his Communications,
 and imparting of Good unto his Creatures: For
 that which is of God in any of us, it is (if I may so
 express it) but the conveying of so many Par-
 ticles of the Divine Nature into us: *Every good*
gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from above:
 Upon the right improvement and good use of
 those Seeds and Principles of Goodness, God gives
 us more. But by that kind of speech of *Isaiah* here
 mention'd, and by what *Ezekiel* reciteth as the
 saying of others, *The Lord hath forsaken the Earth.*
 And even his Spirit doth speak to the same pur-
 pose by the mouth of *Jeremiab*: *Be instructed, O*
Jerusalem, lest my Soul depart from thee, Jer. 6. 8.
 From all which we gather, that when the Inha-

bitants of the Earth are corrupt, or when they are universally given to such a sin (whatever it be, as it is now one, and then another, according as the course and fashion of this World doth turn and lead unto) or to such a thing which is besides, or otherwise than the Law of God is. When they know not, nor will they understand, they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the Earth are out of course, Psal. 82. 5. Like as it was soon after the Creation: And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually: And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the Earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And God looked upon the Earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the Earth, Gen. 6. 5, 6. So it is at this day. When he sees them in such a state, he leaves them to themselves; they will not come out of it, nor learn and receive more knowledge. And so it comes to pass that God doth not dwell amongst them: For ye are not my people, and I will not be your God, Hos. 1. 9.

He is not slack or backward, as some Men count slackness or backwardness, in giving his gifts, or conveying his goodness unto Men; but they are not qualified for the receiving thereof. Be ye clean ye that bear the Vessels of the Lord; for therefore it is that he doth not pour in of his holy Spirit, because the Man or Woman is not cleansed from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and from all unrighteousness. God is before-hand with every Man

Man ; he gives to each a stock or talent, and to him that hath, shall be given ; and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even what he seemeth to have ; that is, he shall have yet less ; for there must be somewhat, or else that could not be taken away ; and then that is taken away from him that hath not ; that is to say, that little which before he had. There is some little left remaining to prove and try him still, whether he will abuse or improve that very little. The truth of all this is evident by experience ; for there is none so very ungodly and wicked, but there are in them some small sparks or seeds of Goodness, some principles of Righteousness and Truth do remain in them. Tho' with many all this is in a very imperfect manner, yet they have also some general Principles of God, and of the things pertaining to his Kingdom, and of future life and immortality. By this little God doth prove them whether they will keep his Commandments, or not ; and whether they will understand and seek after God (*Psal.* 14. 2.) and follow on to know the Lord. By that tincture and conception, and small knowledge they have of him already, if they did once begin to do either, then he would give them more grace and knowledge. So it is with the indifferent middle-size of People, yea, and with the best sort of Christians at this day. God is before-hand with all of them ; for even they do not live up, nor act according to all and the utmost which God makes known unto, and requires of them, and also gives them strength to perform. It is agreeable with the method

thod and wisdom of God, to do nothing which is superfluous, or more than needs must ; nor yet is he wanting in what means are absolutely necessary : *I will cry unto God the most High, unto God that performeth all things for me*, Plal. 57. 2. Which he doth by little and little, and by unexpected ways. He sees where his own People (for there is a fault and defect in them, even in them) do not obey those secret motions of the Spirit which he doth already instill into them, and there he ceases to infuse further motions, because the former were quenched, 1 *Thess.* 5. 19. despised or disobeyed; and so they are forgotten by the person who had them; as also God hath withdrawn them: Whereas if they were cherished, and obeyed, and complied withal, God would give them much more abundantly, and they would have it in full measure, and running over.

By doing the several acts of good and duty, we are more enabled and strengthened to do so still, and yet better and more abundantly in the kind. So by performing acts of Zeal, we grow more zealous; for these things are kept up by the use and exercise; as contrariwise upon the omission & neglect, they do languish and utterly wither away. Agreeable hereunto the Spirit speaketh, *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*, Rev. 3. 2. Thus it is as to the several Graces and Gifts of the Spirit; and as to the good Works which are wrought in us, they are all to be acted and employed on their several objects, and as every opportunity is to be had; for by only keep-

keeping them within, and folding up these Talents in a Napkin, they serve as nothing; they grow listless, and subject to decay and perish. As they said in *Acts 19.2.* *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*; so it is with many Men and Women at this day: They do not so much as know and perceive whether there be any such thing as motions and workings of the Holy Spirit, albeit God hath shewed it unto them, by having put some measure of the Spirit in them.

For there is a residue of the Spirit, *Mal. 2. 15.* and a measure of the Spirit, *John 3. 34.* and there is a taking off of some of the Spirit, and a giving or dividing of it unto others, *Numb. 11. 25.* For *all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he will,* *1 Cor. 12. 11.* Thus it is, that where God doth put his Holy Spirit in Man and Woman, *there is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee,* *Isai. 64. 7.* They do not stir up and actuate the Spirit that is in them. What Advice Paul gives unto Timothy, *Neglect not the Gift that is in thee,* *1 Tim. 4. 14.* *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the Gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands,* *2 Tim. 1. 6.* is proper and necessary to every Christian Soul; that they do not neglect any, but stir up all the Gifts and Graces which are in them: For want of which (as it is a general failure amongst all Professions and sorts, however they are distinguished or named) it comes to pass that there are no such Christians now among us, as was in the days of the Apostles, and in the primitive Times.

Where is now that fervent burning *zeal* for God and Christ, and for all the Commandments without exception, or preferring of one thing before another? Where is that *diligence* and *constancy* in his Worship? Where is that lively Faith in God, with that willing subjection of themselves to the Cross, Persecution, Suffering, and Trouble for the Word and Truth's sake? Where are those now-a-days that are not afraid of the face of Men, and of the blast of the terrible ones, which with them of old Time was as *a storm against the Wall*, *Isai. 25.*
 4. making no impression, much less causing them to yield; for they did remain unshaken, and stood their ground still. Or who is there now that doth not regard the Persons of Men? Or if they do refrain from giving flattering Titles, yet do they not secretly accept Persons? By which Adverb Secretly, the Holy Ghost doth find them out. Who doth now come up to that unfeigned Love of the Brethren, so as to love one another with a pure heart fervently? Where is now that sounding of the Bowels, and that most earnest sensible Compassion one to another which we read they then had? Where is that laying down their Lives for the Brethren, and the following them to Prisons and to Death? They did formerly minister relief unto their Fellow-Christians, tho' they were forbidden so to do by their Persecutors. Where is now to be seen that selling of Lands and Possessions, to distribute to every Man according as he has need, as was in *Acts 4. 34, 35.* What is now become

come of that plentiful Alms giving, and abundant
 liberality, which was shewed forth in those first and
 purest *Ages*? Is not that plainness and simplicity,
 and godly sincerity (which was then in the hearts
 and practices of all the faithful) almost now gone
 off from the Earth; but only here and there some
 imperfect footsteps thereof are to be seen in a very
 few? Is that good Zeal of the ancient *Jews* now
 any where to be found, who would hazard and
 lose their Lives, rather than they would suffer Sta-
 tues to be set up before the Gates of the Temple,
 or eat Swines flesh? And the like Zeal should be
 indefinitely shewed forth for all the Command-
 ments of God, and for all the positive Duties of
 the Gospel, without confining or limiting of it
 to one thing more than another. But now if any
 thing is done against any of the Commandments
 of the Lord, concerning things which should not
 be done (see *Levit.* 4. 22, 27.) there is an indiffe-
 rence and unconcernedness. Some could wish
 (but it will never be done with wishing) that
 things were right, and according to the Law of
 God, *Ezra* 10. 3. there is the utmost pitch of their
 Zeal. Tho' God hath given them knowledge and
 ability for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for
 instruction in righteousness, they would have God
 excuse them now, and pardon them hereafter, if
 they neglect this gift in them. If present interest,
 or any doctrine or opinion, which is espoused and
 peculiar; it perhaps giving denomination to such
 a Sect or Party, is any wise concerned, here they
 will

will exert their Zeal, Knowledge, and Industry: But they will not in like manner contend earnestly for the weightier matters of the Law, as *Judgment, Mercy, Faith, and Obedience* to all the Commandments of God; every one of which is to be observed towards, and by every Creature, without exception or respect of Persons.

They say, These things are sufficiently known already: But are they practised and done accordingly? Herein they speak after a like unworthy manner, as those who said, *Will a Man plead for Baal? let Baal plead for himself*; and it is almost the same what they speak in reference to the God of Israel: For if they may not so properly be styled *Scoffers of these last and worst days*; yet they are ignorant, slothful, walking after their own Lusts, and saying, *What need one do any thing for God? he will do his work for himself*. This they are willingly ignorant of, that there is such a Duty, *That people should help the Lord against the mighty*, Judg. 5. 23. which signifies the Sons of Violence and Transgression, who will do things of their own strength, *because it is in the power of their hand*, Mic. 2. 1. and they are not, nor yet will they be kept within the bounds of God's Commandments. But these People *do err*, (which they utter forth against the Lord, Isai. 32. 5.) *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*; nor yet the way of the present dispensation of his Kingdom: For tho' the help which God doth upon Earth he doth it himself, yet it is always done by the Means and Instruments of his

Servants, as they do act and exert forth those Principles of *Goodness* and *Truth* which he hath implanted in them. As the Apostle argues from this Word, *Yet once more*, Heb. 12. 27. so every Sentence, yea, the least Word and Particle in Scripture is observable. Where we read of some People that their *Spirits were stirred*, there is a motion or making known, or a Command of God to the Heart; which yet the Creature doth not obey. But where it is written God *stirred up the Spirit* of such an one (as *Gideon, David, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel*) there the Person doth actually obey, and goes forth, and is doing according to the Work God calls and employs him about.

Be instructed, all ye slothful and faint-hearted Christians: God hath put nothing in vain in any Man or Woman. That *Goodness* which he first ingrafted, and doth afterwards infuse, should increase and grow up, and it ought to appear forth through the Person in whom it is. Agreeable hereunto is what our Lord saith and commands: *Ye are the Light of the World; a City that is set on an hill cannot be hid; neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*, Matth. 5. 14, 15, 16. That which is of God in any Person, is either *Goodness* or *Truth*; and as *Goodness* ought to appear forth, so the *Truth* in him ought to be spoken out. For tho' the common Saying of the
World

World is (agreeable to the Wisdom of the Flesh which is for sloth, ease, and present safety) That all Truth is not to be spoken; yet we have learned another way to Heaven. *Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? Who shall rest in thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart,* Psal. 15. 1, 2. So that as sure as the Spirit of God doth here teach the way to Heaven, and lay down the foregoing Qualifications and Conditions, which we must have and do before we come there, whatever Truth is in our heart (provided it be the Truth of God, as coming from Him, and arising out of his Word) we must and ought to speak it, come what ever will hereof; if we do not mean to be disappointed of Heaven at last. And if this doing should bring trouble upon our Loins (for this Objection the worldly-wise Man hath against this Duty, and therefore he will refrain to utter it) we must do it for all that; this being that kind of manifold Tribulation which we must go through before we enter into the Kingdom of God.

All People will not be saved who constantly go to Church or Meeting; for of the four sorts of Hearers of the Word, in Mat. 13. there is but one who beareth and bringeth forth fruit unto everlasting life. But there is another sort which comes exactly to the present case: *But he that receiveth seed into stony places, the same is he that beareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root within himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or* perse-

persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is
 offended, Mat. 13. 20, 21. There is no Person but
 who would willingly be saved, and doth perceive
 some lightſomneſs and ſatisfaction to ariſe from
 the Ordinance of *Preaching*, becauſe he thinks
 that this doth ſomewhat further him towards this
 happy and bleſſed End: But when ſuch a Duty is
 preſented before him, or ſuch a thing ſeems to be
 commanded and required of him in the ſame
 Word, which hath a ſhew, or perhaps a real conſe-
 quent of worldly loſs, trouble, or inconvenience:
 This is ſuch a Scumbling-block in his way to Hea-
 ven, that he cannot, or rather will not get over.
 So that here if he doth not the thing, he cries out,
 or ſecretly ejaculates with *Naaman, The Lord par-*
don thy Servant in this thing, conſidering that he doth
ſo much towards God beſides. Or when God re-
 quires and calls them forth to ſuch a particular
 Duty, they answer like thoſe invited to the Wed-
 ding-Dinner, *I pray thee, have me excuſed; for if I*
ſhould do ſo, I ſhould ſuffer damage in ſuch worldly
matters. Nay, if he ſhould do the Duty, but yet
 he is offended, that tribulation and perſecution is come
 upon him for it. This indeed is another ſtep fur-
 ther, but it comes ſhort of Heaven; for it makes
 to do the thing by halves, fearfully, and grudg-
 ingly, whereas God loves a willing Servant. But
 however, it is better ſo done, than not done at all.
 If we do a thing for God, we ſhould expect as
 much, and arm our ſelves before-hand, reſolving
 to be contented, and do the thing reſolutely and
 thoroughly for all, and not to be offended. I

I knew such a Man (who herein did think and act more according to the Flesh than according to the Spirit; we are sure) who hath been very guilty and blame-worthy in this nature. Of such an one will I confess, yet of my self I would not discover this mine own infirmity, but as a Warning and Instruction to others, who shall perhaps read this, that from such a poor & mean Example, whom God hath carried through and preserved all along (blessed be his *Holy Name*) he brought up also out of an horrible Pit, and out of the miry Clay (tho' the Deliverance be not yet thro' and perfect) for I hope that he will set my feet upon a Rock, and establish my goings: *And he hath put a new Song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord,* Psal. 40. 2, 3. This is therefore written to encourage others also to trust in God, as they are serving him faithfully and truly in that Work he hath sent them here on Earth for to do. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees: Say to them that be of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not,* Isai. 35. 3, 4. *And I will set up Shepherds over them, which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord,* Jer. 23. 4. That same Word by which all things and our selves were made, knows what is in Man, what he is liable, prone, and subject unto; and here he doth caution and provide against it.

Fearfulness (both as to the confession of the Truth as it is in Jesus, or omission of Duty to God)

is a very great Sin, as may be conceived by that severe pain and punishment which is reserved hereafter, *Rev. 21. 8.* for those who are guilty of it. This (as may be understood from the foregoing Verse) hinders and deprives from that precious Promise: *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.* Which may be interpreted of overcoming that evil and corruption within our own Nature, or of the temptations which do beset us from without; which many times we do not overcome, for fear of losing so much pleasure and sweetness, or subjecting our selves to pain and irksomeness. But if the fear of this was rooted out of our Nature, we should soon overcome those temptations. Or it may be understood when we enter into warfare and fighting with the multitude of the Sinners and Transgressors: For every Minister upon his preaching or publishing of the Word of God faithfully (*And he that bath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully, Jer. 23. 18.* doth hereby make an attack or onset upon the Sinners of the World) who again are as so many *Briars* and *Thorns* which will prick and vex him; nay, it is a falling among *Scorpions, Ezek. 2. 6.* who will clasp about, and endeavour to sting him unto death.

This was the Controversie and War which the Prophets, Ministers, and those Worthies of old time (all whom the Lord will recount) were engaged in. We read that some of them did succeed in the thing they did thus contend for, as to bring the

the high and mighty, and multitude of the People over to the Commandment and Will of God. Others again were persecuted and killed as they did persevere resolutely in this their attempt and message. Herein is God glorified, when his Servant will suffer pain, inconvenience, hardship, or restraint to his body, loss of outward livelihood, when he will not only hazard, but lay down his own life for the Word of his Ministry; and when he will bring things on to this upshot and trial, God doth delight in the action of his Creatures. As he hath endued them with life and power of action, so these should be put forth and used; for he hates the slothful Servant, who is negligent, idle, and doth nothing. Hardly any thing doth more provoke the eyes of his Glory, than distrust and unbelief. Distrust of his Faithfulness and Power, as if he would not, or could not carry them through. And then unbelief of his Goodness and Truth, that admit they should lose their All, even their own Life in his Service, as if he would not make it up unto them again in the *restitution of all things*.

This sinful Fear doth arise and proceed forth from Ignorance; for they imagine or apprehend there is more hurt and smart in the persecution than really there is, and thereupon they decline it not knowing thoroughly the nature of things, how there is nothing so bad but what may and can be endured. Every thing here is sudden, transitory, and passeth away like a shadow; So that it may

be born, yea, and it is to be chosen, if it doth
 tend unto Good in the latter end; such is the very
 disposal and establishment of things. And the
 several Dispositions of God towards his Servants
 and People in this life, are, that he might humble
 them, and prove them, to do them good in their lat-
 ter end. Deut. 8. 16. *There hath no temptation taken*
you, but such as is common to man: But God is faith-
ful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that
you are able; but will also with the temptation make
a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Cor.
 10. 3. The Apostle doth not here so immediate-
 ly mean these common Temptations which we
 meet with, to Pride, Lust, and Sensuality, though
 this is also true as to them: But he writes thus to
 the Church under a grievous and persecuted state,
 and as it was under the fiery trial, enduring the
 worst that Men could invent or inflict; which
 trials were torment or death it self. And yet a-
 midst them God did by his Spirit support and
 bear up the Hearts of his People; and many times
 the temptation or trial did kill the Body: So that
 there was no other escape or deliverance; but the
 soul was by the falling of that House (it remain-
 ing no longer fit for her Habitation) driven out,
 and forced to take Wings like a Dove, and fly a-
 way into the uppermost parts of the World, that
 she might get above, and remain in those places
 of the Blessed, which are freed from all distur-
 bance and hurt of evil Spirits, where God shall
 wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall

be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away, Rev. 21. 4.

Another reason why many People are so very afraid to endure trouble for the sake of God, is, in that if they should be cast into Prison, they would be hindred from his Publick Worship, or from doing the Work which God hath sent them on this Earth for to do. Herein again they may be quieted and satisfied, that if they should suffer according to the Will of God, 1 Pet. 4. 11. He doth not require Impossibilities, but accepts the Will for the Deed, when he sees it is a real Intention which would come forth into Act accordingly, if there was power and opportunity. He may make it up in the Day of Recompence for the same Good, as they would have done if they had been in full liberty and power of action. As God is glorified in the Action, so likewise he is glorified in the manifold variety of the Condition of his Creatures. *And all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the Reins and Hearts; and will give unto every one of you according to his Work.* Rev. 2. 23. Besides what doth appear forth through them in the uppermost sight, he doth search (for so his Word imports) to know what is yet further hid or wrapt up, or infolden in them to render unto every one according to what his Work was, or would be.

Now let all the Churches (that is, according to the signification at this Day, the People of the several

ral Opinions and Ways of Worship) be examined
 and ask'd, What have their Works been through
 their past Life? What have they done for God?
 The best and utmost answer that they can give, is,
 That they have constantly attended and frequent-
 ed his *Ordinances* of Worship from their youth up.
 They have heard, read, and spoken of many good
words and precious *truths*. They have given Alms
 according to their ability, and they have spent
 much time in Prayer unto God; they have shewn
 forth Bowels of *Compassion*, and done what *kindness*
 they could for their *Neighbour* at all times. Such an
 account of their *Stewardship* as this they may give
 in. But have they managed and traded with all
 the Talents which the Lord of Heaven and
 Earth had committed unto them? Have they ser-
 ved God at all times with all their Power, and
 with all their Strength, and with all their Mind,
 and with all their Soul? Have they not omitted
 secret Duty at many and sundry times? I do not
 mean that which is open and manifest in the
 sight of the World, but what is known between
 God and their own Consciences? Have they per-
 formed the Commandment of the Lord, and
 executed his Judgments? Which Words *Per-*
form and *Execute*, as it is in the Scripture-mean-
 ing, 1 Sam. 15. 13. Ezek. 18. 17. doth import to
 do the thing thoroughly, Jer. 7. 5. and according
 to the utmost as is required. How many secret
 motions of God's Spirit in them have they quen-
 ched, despised, and disobeyed? How many car-
 nal Reasonings, Excuses, and Fears have kept

them off from such and such things, which they ought to have done? How many things have been done out of respect, compliance, flattery, and pleasing had to Man, which were not consistent with the pleasing and approving of themselves unto God only? Even in matters of Religion, how often have the Commandments and Traditions of Men been more carefully and zealously observed, than the immediate Commandments of God Himself? How often hath more Heed and Obedience been given unto such Orders and Rules of Man's Devising and Wisdom, or to the meer Saying of such and such Preachers, than to what the Holy Ghost enjoineeth, or the Spirit it self teacheth?

I do not lay these things open to judge and upbraid my fellow-Christians; but that both they and my self may see our Errors, Failings, and Neglects, in order to amend and avoid such for the time to come: Neither do I this by way of accusing my Brethren, to inform or make intercession against them before God, to lessen his present Favour and future Recompence; in that there is so little good and so much ill-deserving in their best godly Performances: For thou O Lord, knowest and understandest these things long before, and much more. O Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, John 21. 17. And so it is contrariwise; Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that such and such People do offend, displease, and provoke thee. What
even

ever are the furnishes of the Ignorant, or the Imaginations of the wicked and ungodly Multitude, God knows the sinfulness of Sin, with the utmost malignity and evil deserving thereof, more than the most invidious and rigid Person (as they call him) can lay it open, and declare it: A thought doth arise in some Hearts, as if by writing Words of Truth God was hereby put in mind, or the thing was hereby made worse before him than really it is; and from hence doth spring up some part of that Root of Bitterness and Enmity against the Truth, whereby many are defiled. But herein they do err, not knowing the way of Knowledge, how it comes and is conveyed into Man; for as a Conduit-Pipe is dry, and hath no Water in it self, but what it receives or comes from the Fountain or River; so we are meer Creatures, and have nothing but what we have received: As Christ said (in whom are hid all the measures of Wisdom and Knowledge) *A Man can receive nothing, except it be given him from above*; so it is certain that we know nothing at all but what God knows long before; and he doth send and infuse it in a secret and invisible (but yet both sensible and intelligible) way into our Minds and Understandings. So we cannot put God in mind of any thing; but he doth put us in mind: Accordingly it is one Office of the Spirit to bring things to our remembrance.

As for making things worse than they are, this seems to be somewhat like unto him who accuses

our Brethren before God day and night: But here it is to be understood, that Satan and the fallen apostate Spirits are Creatures of God, and were made by him. Tho' it seems hard to conceive, and much more difficult to utter concerning the first rise and origin of Evil, yet this may be safely and truly affirmed, That what Knowledge and Understanding the miserable Spirits have, they had it at first by Creation from God, notwithstanding they have since spoiled, corrupted, perverted, and turn'd it into Malice, Envy, and all manner of Evil: They are evil wholly, continually, and throughout; whereas Man is made up of a mixture of Good and Evil; with some the Good is predominant and weighing down; with others the Evil is so. So that it is to be thought and supposed, that God doth withhold all mean Communications and Influences of Goodness, and of his Spirit, towards evil Spirits; which yet he doth day by day afford to the Children of Men, and that more or less, according as they deserve and improve it, or neglect and abuse it. So that let Satan do his worst, as it is proverbially and truly said, *God is above the Devil*; so his Knowledge doth as much exceed the other's (who is a Creature, and by him made), as the whole Ocean doth a single Drop of Water. In the 1st. and 2d. Chapter of *Job*, in the 3d. of *Zechariah*, and in *Rev.* 12. 10. we see and understand God's superlative and over-ruling Goodness and Equity, how he doth moderate the matter, and affirm

it by the way of Favour and Mercy on the side of Mankind. And this is but as talking a little before the Day of Assize; an Emblem and Fore-runner, how he will determine it eternally on their side at the last and great Day of Judgment, notwithstanding all the Informations, Accusations, and Aggravations of Satan. And now if there should be any of his Ministers transformed into Ministers of Righteousness alike unto Satan in this, who draw up more heavy and false Indictments, than the true and very nature of the thing doth require and will bear: Or if the Conscience it self (which is yet more) pressed with Sin and Guilt, should fore-cast too grievous things, all this will not do one jot of harm in the Day of the Lord; for he who hath prepared his Throne for Judgment, knows all things in the World: *He shall judge the World in righteousness; he shall minister Judgment to the People in uprightness*, Psal. 9. 8. In the new Translation it is said, *He shall minister true Judgment to the People. Who weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance*, He will make things to hang even, exact, and equal. *Judgment will I lay to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummets*, Isai. 28. 17. *He shall judge the World with Righteousness, and the People with his Truth*, Psal. 96. 13. *With Righteousness shall he judge the World, and the People with equity*, Psal. 98. 9. Now Equity is a mild thing, which doth stare, moderate, and adjust a matter: And then after all God doth reserve Mercy, even after Judgment and Condemnation, for that is its proper place.

At the last Day Mercy shall rejoyce against Judgment in such a signal, eminent, great, and universal a manner, even as to swallow up all Judgment in Victory: *When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God, Ezek. 16. 63. When this Song shall be sung, Thou hast taken away all thy Wrath; thou hast turn'd thy self from the fierceness of thine Anger, Plat. 85. 3. God is more merciful than ever it entred into the Heart to conceive, or the Ear hath heard; that as it is written at the first Creation, The Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy, Job 38. 7. Now compare this with Isai. 14. 12. Lucifer is there called Son of the Morning; so that if ever he sang for joy, it was before he fell from Heaven. And it is both possible and probable, that for joy, when he was first brought forth into being, he might sing a Song of Praise and Acknowledgment unto the great Creator of all Things. And so if we look back to Gen. 6. 2, 4. There we find the wicked and ungodly of the World styled *The Sons of God*; for so they are by Creation and Workmanship. This was flesh, and soon after the Creation; for we never, as I know of, find them so called again throughout all Scripture. So that by what may be gathered from Psal. 104. 30, 31. *Thou renewest the face of the Earth: The Lord shall rejoyce in his Works*: So at the very last upshot and end of all things, Goodness, Equity, and Mercy will display and manifest that; that if so be the Morning Stars may not again sing together, and all the Sons of God*

(observe

(observe that Particle *all*, including both the Sons by Creation, as well as those by Grace and Adoption) may now shout together for joy, yet at least it may be somewhat more tolerable, than that certain, fearful looking for of Judgment, and the fiery Indignation, *Hab. 10. 27.* or when they did believe and tremble, *Jam. 2. 19.* They must indeed undergo the devouring Fire (for all Scripture must be fulfilled) and they must see and suffer also, which in probability will be throughout a much longer duration than the time was, in which the *Mosaical* Institutions did last, which were said to be a Statute for ever; or as it is written, *That the Ordinances of Day and Night shall not cease while the Earth remaineth, Gen. 8. 22.* Which *Earth* in the Book of Psalms, is said to be established for ever, *Psal. 78. 69.* Again it is written, *If these Ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a Nation before me for ever, Jer. 31. 36.* And yet the Seed of *Israel* doth at this day seem to cease to be a Nation; as it is yet more certain, that this Earth at last shall pass away, and the Ordinances of Day and Night shall then also cease, and come to an utter end. But God only knows what may succeed after all this, when those miserable Creatures have lain under condemnation and punishment a much longer space of duration than six or seven thousand Years now (within which time all this lower Creation, and the Works thereof, in probability will be determined and finished) God will look down from the height of his Sanctuary

Quary (when the Psalmist spoke thus by the Spirit, it was then to come) from Heaven will the Lord behold the Earth (yea, and who knows whether he will behold yet lower; If I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there) To hear the groaning of the Prisoners, to loose those that are appointed to death, Psal. 102. 19, 20. In the Margin there, it is Children of Death. This one portion of Scripture is of more worth than ten thousand Worlds. If any thing of good or mitigation is intended to them, it will come in upon this account, That they are the Creatures of God, and his Workmanship. The Lord shall rejoice in his Works, and they shall reciprocally rejoice in the Lord their God. If those very Creatures (who seem rejected Heb. 12. 17. and hated Rom. 9. 13. by him) can but then call upon him by the Name of the Lord, and lay hold on him as Esau did with his Father Isaac (compare Gen. 27. 34, 38. with Heb. 12. 16, 17.) And when Esau heard the Words of his Father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his Father, Bless me, even me, O my Father. Here he continues and keeps up, and puts in mind of the Relation. After his Excuse and Answer had, still he doth continue and repeat, and again double the Words of his Relation: Hast thou but one Blessing? Bless me, even me also, O my Father; and Esau lift up his voice, and wept. So it may be conceived of those condemned, forlorn, and miserable Creatures, that after they have been long in wailing and gnashing of Teeth, with howling and great crying, if they can but then call upon Him

Him by the Name of Creator, and remember and lay it before him, *That they are the work of his hands: Thy Mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever* (it reaches and extends beyond the Day of Judgment, even throughout all Eternity) *For sake not the work of thine own hands*, Psal. 138. 8. Do not leave them for ever in utter despair and misery. God hath more than one Blessing to Angels and Saints; he may make Devils and condemned Sinners Hewers of Stone and Drawers of Water, *John 9. 2.* That is, somewhat ease, and exempt them from the worst pain and thralldom: For *there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: For there is no difference between the Flesh of a Saint, and the Flesh of a Sinner* (and I suppose there is not much more as to the outward original frame and compolure of Spirits of the same kind) *For the same Lord over all* (that is, Creatures) *is rich unto all that call upon him: For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved*, Rom. 10. 12, 13. This is cited from *Joel 2. 32.* and there it is delivered: So that by the comprehensiveness of the Word *Whosoever* (which takes in all without exception) and from the Apostle's arguing, *That the Lord is rich unto all that call upon him:* That is, he hath Goodness abundant and to spare (for he doth ten thousand times exceed even that of *Isaac*, or of the best and most tender Father; for 'tis he who created the Bowels, and put Compassion in them.) By the Riches of his Goodness he is obliged to do somewhat for every one that calls upon him. So that if these Creatures

tures can, and do but call upon the Name of the Lord, though it will not be after the same manner, and nothing to an equal degree of that Salvation the elect Servants of God are possessed of; yet they will at length be somewhat saved and delivered from that depth and grievousness of pain and misery which they have long groaned under: *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the Spirit should sail before me, and the Souls that I have made, Iſai. 57. 16. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all, Rom. 11. 32.* As the Wisdom of God is manifold, so the Truths arising out of his Word, are of more universal latitude, and of longer extent, even throughout the succeeding Eternity, than that particular occasion upon which they were at first cited. For these two great Scriptures have a further meaning and signification, than to troubled and afflicted Consciences, or to the temporal casting off of the Jews. The same may be yet further understood from the very Nature of God (who is infinitely, eternally, and essentially good) and from the Analogy and Reason of things, that he will not contend for ever in the punishment and misery of his Creatures; but he hath shut them all under deserved, and the greater part under actual condemnation, that he might have mercy upon all. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* was the Conclusion which the Apostle

Apostle made, when himself had before, according to the measure of the Knowledge given him, searched and found out some of them. But thus he pronounceth concerning what yet remained behind, and which himself understood not any further.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark Iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Psal. 130. 3. And Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified, Psal. 143. 2. For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, Rom. 3. 23. The best Servant of God that was ever, or is now upon the Earth, doth come short of that Holiness (as He is holy) and of performing that Duty in all things, and at all times, which God did command or require of him. Such Truths are to be made known, which shew how these are so, let whatever imputation will be fastned upon it. To come with Ropes about our Necks, and acknowledge our selves worthy of Death eternal; to confess our Sin in the most aggravating Circumstances; to arraign our selves, and make no other Plea than acknowledgment of our own Guile; that we have transgressed against the Lord, and to cry our mightily and earnestly unto him for pardon and mercy: All this is the best and soonest way to make our peace with God. So did David and the Prophets. Saith one, We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the

voice

voice of the Lord our God: Jer. 3. 15. But *truths* are all as an unclean thing, and all our Righteousness are as filthy Rags, Isai. 64. 6. Some may be apt to surmise, What need the Prophet mention this, for peradventure God might accept this Righteousness as it is; whereas by vilifying and depreting it as he doth, he may put God in mind, or move him not to accept it. What an absurd and wrong imagination is here! For it was the Spirit of God which did first acquaint and make this known unto *Isaiab*; and he speaks it forth unto the People, in order to humble them, and make them have a low Conceit of their best Performances; To be as nothing in our own sight; to acknowledge our own Guilt and Unworthiness; to bear iniquity, and loath our selves for our Sins: This is the way to get the Favour and Mercy of God; for so did the holy Men and Women of old, who served him, and were accepted by him.

And so when God would tell People of their Sins and Transgressions, when they have done amiss, and erred from his Commandments, he doth not now speak unto the Inhabitants of the Earth out of the cloudy Pillar, or from the Battlements of Heaven; but now he speaks in the still Voice of his Word and Spirit unto their Hearts and Consciences. Which Word is yet more clearly and distinctly revealed unto some of his peculiar and elect Servants; whom again he prompts by his Spirit, to speak out, and publish the same Word unto others. And so they do not tell and inform

inform God, but God doth tell and inform them. Agreeable hereunto is that kind of speaking unto *Ezekiel, Go and shew the House of Israel their Doings, and cause them to know the Abominations of their Fathers, Ezek. 20. 4.* God sees it, and is displeased, *Isa. 59. 15.* He knows it, and is grieved: *Forty years long was I grieved with this Generation, Psal. 95. 10.* His own Spirit is pressed until it is actually stirred up; which same Spirit he doth infuse it into some Pipe here on Earth, either Man or Woman, who again doth receive, convey, and vent it forth, by publishing and making it known unto other Men and Women: *I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed with sheaves.* He doth here speak after the manner of Men for our Infirmities: And hereby we may apprehend how the intercourse is between God and his Creatures, that whatever good is done here on Earth, it is (if I may express it) the Actings of God through his Creatures. Hence are those Sayings in Scripture, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them, 2 Cor. 10. 6. God dwelleth in you, 2 Cor. 10. 16. It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you, Mat. 10. 20. God is in you of a truth, 2 Cor. 14. 25.* And where it is so, he is a continued Principle of right action and well-doing.

Hereby we may perceive the superlative and infinite and exceeding Goodness of God, who is the Root and Foundation of all Beings. He doth as much exceed all the Inhabitants of the Earth (take them all in their Generations and Places, when

when and where they were on this Earth) as the whole Earth doth exceed an handful of Dust or Sand. We see how much one good Man doth, how he reaches forth and extends his Goodness far and near, and he is always seeking Opportunities for exerting of it. If he is a Man of Knowledge and Wisdom, the Lips of the Wise disperse Knowledge, and it is unexpressible how much good his Words may do, when the sound thereof goes out far and near; and yet much more good will they do, when *they are written for the Generations to come*, Psal. 102. 18. and for after-Ages. I have often thought, when I see a just Man, who is *perfect in his Generations, and walketh with God*, Gen. 6. 9, who is right towards God in all things, and withal zealous, diligent, and active in his Service (as God hath all along in the foregoing Generations, and in the several Countries raised up such single Instruments) what a blessed World would there be, if hundreds and thousands did the like! Each Man would bring over his thousand, and ten would put ten thousand to flight, to the utter and thorough subduing of the whole World of the Sinners and Ungodly: Whereas they appearing singular in their Generations, it comes to pass through the great and continued opposition of Satan (the name of whose Instruments is Legion, for they are many) that such could not effect any great matter; or if they did somewhat (for what is of God will stand in spite of Men o Devils) yet it was not in that degree to which

which they did aim and intend it. They were like light shining in a dark place, which others at a distance could just see the glimpse and appearance of, but they had no benefit thereof. And then this burning light in his Generation was either blown out (for the Devil hath sometimes power to kill the Witnesses) or wasted sooner; or if none of these did happen, it must at length be naturally spent out. In this also they were like the Captain of their Salvation: *I have trodden the Wine-press alone, and of the People there was none with me*, Isa. 63. 3. For when once they begin to be bruised, or the sparkles of Blood do fly, then the People will be sure to keep far enough off. Now God did act all along in those single Creatures; but why he did not stir up more, or others also; or if he did press upon them with the secret motions of his Spirit, which they did not obey: Whereas he could have been upon them, even upon them with a strong hand also, and with such an over-ruling pressure of their Spirits, that they should have been likewise actually stirred up: But it was not so, the reasons hereof how it was then for the great Ends of his own Glory and Man's Trial, himself will rehearse when he writeth up the People.

But this is certain, that in those Times of universal Reformation, which are now drawing on in these latter Days, he will raise up a proportionable number of Instruments, even thousands and ten thousands, who shall certainly and actually

effect the very thing; *Until the Spirit be poured down upon us from on high, Isai. 32. 15.* The word *Pour*, doth denote in a much more large and plentiful manner, than that dropping and distilling of the Spirit heretofore, only in such peculiar and chosen Vessels. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, Acts 1. 17.* Thus it will be in the very last Days at the conclusion and shutting up of all. But if we look back unto the foregoing Generations, as to the state and progress of pure and undefiled Religion, or as to the Knowledge of God in this or other Countries, that of *Jeremiab* is here true and applicable, *They have gone backward, and not forward: Since the day that your Fathers came forth of the Land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my Servants the Prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them; yet they bearkned not unto me, nor enclined their ear; but hardned their neck, they did worse than their Fathers, Jer. 7. 25, 26.* When God did make an appearance and shew himself by Miracles and Signs, then People were for the time in some measure as they should be. But when they were over, and the remembrance of them did go off and vanish by degrees, then they did return to their former Sin, Corruption, Ignorance, customary and formal Worship. So it hath been since the days of Christ and his Apostles, when we were redeem'd from spiritual *Egypt*, from the Bondage and Hurt of Sin, Satan, and Death, then indeed there was a peculiar People; but
 ever

ever since they have *gone backward and not forward*. And so when the People of this Nation, about an hundred and fifty Years since, came out of the *Egyptian* Darknels of Popish Ignorance and from out of the Wilderness of Superstition, into a fuller and clearer light of the Gospel, which they worked through, and brought out from the very fire; then indeed were the Churches cleansed and bright: But almost ever since it may be said, They have *gone backward, and not forward*. When the Storm of Persecution is over them, then it doth rouze up their Zeal, their greater Fear of God, and their greater Concern for the Truth and Spirituality of his Worship. This Fan doth also purge the Floor as to blow away the Chaff of Hypocrites, and gather the Wheat of real, firm, sincere Christians more close together. But when that is over, the others come in again, and they are mingled together, and they do lie promiscuously one with another.

At this day the Churches have rest and free liberty of Worship, according to their several Opinions and Persuasions; yet they have *gone backward, and not forward*. For is there not a *Laodicean* lukewarmness, and indifferency spread throughout them all? Are not the Ordinances of Prayer and Preaching become cold, flat, dull, and low? Do they mount up as Eagles, *Isai. 40. 31.* Or rather do they not still lie among the Pots, *Psal. 68. 13.* Instead of *publishing the Name of the Lord, ascribe ye Greatness unto our God, Deut. 32. 3.*

and speaking of the *wonderful Works of God*, Acts 2. 11. they are taken up with mans Notions, Sayings, and Phrases; and they are bewildered in the little things of this lower World; for they do not understand even them thoroughly and clearly. Where seems to be a little pure and primitive Christianity, is not there much Ignorance and coming short of the Knowledge of the Things of God, as they ought to be known? There are either some affected Phrases of their own, which they harp and insist altogether on; or there is a preference of some select parts and portions thereof, before the whole Word of God; all which ought to be brought in equally upon occasion, without preferring one thing before another, or at least not to make the one a pretence to shut out the other. Are there not dark Speeches used (if it be not sometimes unintelligible and mystical nonsense) whereas the time now is that they should speak no more to us in Proverbs, but they should shew us plainly of the *Father*, John 16. 25. And in these later times *the Spirit speaketh expressly*, 1 Tim. 4. 1. yea, and clearly, viz. such things as may be understood; not in Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth (not in humane affected Phrases) but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual with spiritual.

And compare Scripture with Scripture, we shall find that such, whether they be Men or Women, who say when the Lord hath not spoken, or who speak a *Vision of their own heart*, and not out

of the mouth of the Lord, Jer. 23. 16. Which prophecy out of their own heart, Ezek. 13. 17. Or who say that it shall so come to pass, when the Lord hath not commanded them, and it will not come to pass, and the thing doth not follow, such are presumptuous : Deut. 18. 22. They take God's Name in vain, and a Woe is now pronounced against them, which at last will fall down upon them to their own misery and condemnation.

Is it not in some measure fulfilled at this day ? We see not our Signs, *there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long,* Psal. 74. 9. That knoweth any thing certainly from God (as in times past he did reveal his Secret unto his Servants the Prophets) or how long this Judgment of the Sword will be upon the Nations, nor after what manner and when God will work Salvation, and establish Peace in the midst of the Earth : *For God is my King of old, working Salvation in the midst of the Earth,* Psal. 74. 12. *I will be thy King ; Where is any other that may save thee in all thy Cities and thy Judges ? of whom thou saidst, Give me a King and Princes,* Hos. 13. 12. These things will so be, when God doth reign immediately over the Hearts of all Men ; and they yield that Obedience unto him, as now they do to their Kings and Governours after the Flesh. But at this day it is fulfilled, *Therefore night shall be upon you, that ye shall not divine ; and the Sun shall go down over the Prophets, and it shall be dark over them ; then shall the Seers be ashamed, and the Diviners con-*
founded ;

founded ; yea, they shall all cover their Lips, for there is no answer of God, Mic. 3. 6, 7. Consider thoroughly of this, all ye Preachers in the several Churches and Congregations ; and do ye not sensibly perceive the Truth of this last ? There is no answer of God. There is at this day (and accordingly he that is most spiritual, and knows most of God, doth most sensibly perceive it) the face of the Covering and the Veil that is spread over all Nations, Isa. 25. 7. There is a Veil and Covering over the Hearts and Understandings of Men (I feel it upon mine own) that they have not that constant lively Faith and clear Knowledge of the future and invisible things of God, as was in the days of Moses, or of Christ, or as themselves had in former times when they were illuminated, Heb. 10. 32. Or as themselves shall have, when God shall be pleased, according to his gracious Promise here, to destroy that Covering and Veil, and to break it that we may see through. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the Vail is upon their Hearts ; nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the Veil shall be taken away, 2 Cor. 3. 15, 16.

Religion is now at a low ebb, I do not mean as to outward Worship, the Profession, Appearance, and Shew thereof ; for that was retained all along throughout the foregoing Generations : But so it is as to the walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless, in all Righteousness and true Holiness. To shew the exceeding stress that the People lay upon this thing of their going
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constantly to the place, and their performing the outward act of Worship, the Holy Ghost doth repeat it three times in his Caution concerning it: *Trust ye not in lying Words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these, Jer. 7. 4.* That is as much as to say, it is a lying and false Word, let People repeat it over and over, and insist upon it never so much. It is not the bare going to Church, or to such a Congregation, is all that God doth require of Men and Women; nor is this sufficient to bring them to Heaven. To say or affirm that this is all which God doth require, or that this with no more ado will bring them to Heaven, is a lying Word: For the Lord hath shewed in the foregoing Verse, what he doth require of Men; namely, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. This is the way to be fixed, and for ever to abide in the high and blessed place of Heaven. Again he finds fault, *Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other Gods whom ye know not* (here the Prophet enumerates the breach of Six Commandments, and in like manner it may be applied to the other Four, viz. Sabbath-breaking, Dishonouring of Parents, Falshood and Covetousness) *and come and stand before me in this House which is called by my Name, and say, We are delivered to do all these Abominations? Is this House which is called by my Name, become a Den of Robbers in your eyes? behold, even I have seen it,*

saith the Lord, Jer. 7. 9, 10, 11. So that the Inference is natural and necessary, That it is not the going to Church, or to any other Place of his Worship upon the Lord's Day, or upon every Week-Day, will serve to make an atonement, or blind and deceive God for the breach and transgressions of his Laws and Commandments; for he doth here say, I have seen it, even through this Veil of Hypocrisie; let them think or say what they will, that their Trade, or Business, or Necessity of Affairs do require them so to do. To the same purpose is the first Chapter of Isaiah throughout: I hate, I despise your Feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn Assemblies. Tho' ye offer your Burnt-offerings and Meat-offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the Peace-offering of your Fat Beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy Songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy Viols (what must we do then!) But let Judgment run down as Waters, and Righteousness as a mighty Stream. Have ye offered unto me Sacrifices and Offerings in the Wilderness forty Years, O House of Israel, Amos 5. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. Have ye worshipped me according to your several Ways and Congregations in this Wilderness of the Earth (where one is at a loss to find the right Way through your manifold Opinions and Divisions) for almost six thousand Years, O ye Children of Men? But still ye have continued in your own Doings, and in the things ye have made to your selves, whereas that is the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not Man,
Heb,

Heb. 8. 2. And now what if God himself should say in the last Day, as he doth now speak from Heaven in this his Word. *I hate, I despise, I will not accept, neither will I regard your Burnt offerings, Meat-offerings, and Peace-offerings?* Which he himself did yet command and institute, and Man did then use them to please, atone, and be reconciled to Almighty God.

This is to be understood by the way, that God will one day speak himself in person, with a loud and outward audible Voice, what he doth now speak from Heaven in the still Voice of his Spirit, or in the Scriptures (which are his Epistle sent unto the Inhabitants of the Earth.) And whereas with many Men their Letters are powerful, but their bodily Presence is weak and contemptible, it will be contrariwise as to God: For his Word now (as written or spoken by Men) is weakness, 1 Cor. 1. 25. But when himself shall utter his Voice, *the Earth will melt*, Psal. 46. 6. *The Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat*, 2 Pet. 3. 10. *For the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trumpet of God*, 1 Thess. 4. 16. So that he will make a yet greater impression, and cause a greater shaking, not only upon the living Creatures, but also upon the very material Works of God, even all the World over; than that manner of giving the Law did formerly upon the single and particular place of Mount Sinai; concerning which, see Exod. 19. Heb. 12. 17, 18. 19. So

So it will be pronounced concerning the several Acts and Parts of Worship, outward Prayer, Praise, Hearing the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Not that these are to be cast off and neglected; in no wise: But yet so it is when it doth become the Sacrifice of Fools, the Sacrifice of Sinners and Transgressors; for they provoke God, and deceive themselves (whereby they are Fools) when they keep up one with another; that is, when they worship God, and yet continue in sin and transgression. The whole Scripture is full to the same purpose.

But here it may be surmised, That if the case is so, it is good for such not to worship God at all. But all Men cannot receive this Saying, but unto whom it is given; for Worship is due from every Creature unto God; and these things are written, not that they should cast off and neglect it: in no wise: But that every one should turn away from his Iniquities, *Acts* 3. 26. and cease from all manner of sin and transgression. And then they are to obey all the Commandments of God, which relate to Good or Evil, Righteousness or Wrong, Truth or Falshood, enjoying the one, and forbidding the other, as well as they do already obey those his Commandments, which pertain to his Worship. Except they do this also, they cannot be saved, and all their Worship will signifie nothing. It is strange, but yet true and common, That many People of both Sexes should go on blindly and ignorantly, for thirty, forty,

forty, fifty, and sixty Years, yea, throughout all
 their life, in this Deceit of being Worshippers of
 God, and yet not doing his Will; whereas it is
 written so plainly, that every Capacity may under-
 stand it. *Now we know that God beareth not Sin-*
ners; but if any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth
his Will, him he beareth, John 9. 31. As we read
 that Prayer of *Moses and David*, and that Pro-
 mise which God made unto his People by *Isaiab*,
 of *Levi* he said, *Bless, Lord, his Substance, and accept*
the Work of his Hands, Deut. 33. 8, 11. *Remember*
all thy Offerings, and accept thy Burnt-sacrifice. Selah.
 Psal. 20. 3. *They shall come up with acceptance on*
mine Altars, Isai. 60. 7. and *Ezek. 20. 40, 41.*
 We learn this Word of Instruction (which may
 make us to fear and take heed, and beg pardon
 for the Iniquity of our holy things, and to pray
 instantly and continually for acceptance) that in
 all things we do in order to God, or pertaining
 to Religion, as it is commonly named or under-
 stood, unless God do accept thereof, it all signifies
 nothing: Nay, what is yet further, *It is as cutting*
of a Dog's neck (there is not much in that) *it is as*
offering Swines blood (this doth displease God) *it is*
as blessing an Idol, Isai. 66. 3. which is the highest
 and superlative degree of provoking God to the
 greatest manner that possibly can be. So they
 do rather displease than please; they make God to
 be further off, and more angry rather than bring
 him near, and make him reconciled unto us.
 Hear this Word, all ye People of *England*, that
 enter

enter in at the Church-doors, or Meeting-Houses, to praise the Lord.

Another thing wherein ye are defective and found wanting, is this, For they say and do not, Mat. 23. 2. They hear, read, and talk of many good Words and precious Truths, but they do not turn them into practice and suitable action. It is recorded of Moses the Servant of the Lord, He was mighty in Words and in Deeds, Acts 7. 22. so he was for both; and therein he pleased and was accepted by God, who had hereupon a favour and love towards him: But this belongs not to the nominal, nor yet to the real Christians of this Age, who make a fair shew in the Flesh, and they are sincere, and of the better sort; yet herein they are found wanting, many of them are mighty in Words, but not in Deeds. They do talk of the highest Duties and Attainments of Religion, and they do conceive, speak, read, hear, and write of the great Truths of God; but how to perform the same at all times, and in all places, and in reference to all Persons, they find not. Towards the publishing and making known these Truths throughout all this Region, or to hazard, or even to suffer actual tribulation for the Word's sake, they are offended, and themselves will not run the risque and experience of it. The like Character is given unto him who is greater than Moses, with a transversal of the same Words, Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet, mighty in deed and in word before God, and before all the People, Luke 24. 19. The
Holy

Holy Ghost hereby signifying, that he did actually more good than himself talked of; and herein he did exceed *Moses* and all the Children of God: For with them their Thoughts and Words do rise higher than their Actions. For none ever did, nor yet can obey and do more for God, than he doth think or speak of. But their Performances and Doings come short of their Words, as both Words and Actions do come short of their Thoughts; for many, good, excellent, high, great, and glorious Things are thought of, which are never spoken out. But this is Man's fault and infirmity; for every thing that is good and true, ought to be spoken out; and if possible the same is to be put into practice. But where power is wanting, or opportunity is not to be had, there it should come forth into will and real endeavour; so that in good and duty we should still go as far as we can.

If we seek out of the Book of the Lord, and read, we shall there find, that the whole of Mankind is distinguished, not into such Names as we give one another, of Papist, Protestant, Church-of-England-man, Presbyterian, Independent, Anabaptist, Quaker, Sabbatarian, Socinian, Dissenter, or such-like; but into Righteous and Wicked, *they that serve God, and they that serve him not*, Mat. 23. 18. This serving of God is not calling him the God, nor yet styling themselves the Children of *Abraham*, nor yet the ranking themselves among the Members of a pure Church at this Day; nor

yet paying unto God Acts of Worshipevery morning and evening ; for whosoever keeps all the parts and times of Worship, and yet will not obey one point of the Law of God, when he doth all the rest, he is guilty of all, and an ungodly Man for all that. But this is the Service of God to do all his Will and Pleasure ; for as to our matters according to the Flesh, it is not the bare calling him Master, or living in his Family, or paying unto him outward Respect ; all this will not make them to be Servants indeed : But it is the constant doing of their Business, according to what they are bid and commanded from time to time. The Spirit of God doth foresee there is a sort of People, who goe in that Deceit of calling themselves of the Holy City, and staying upon the God of Israel, of worshipping God, and speaking honourably of his Name : These would take it ill if any one should say they did not serve God. As indeed they do not, tho' *they serve with an Offering, and weary themselves with Incense*, Isai. 43. 23. Tho' they spend never so much time in outward Worship, and take all the Opportunities and Seasons for it ; yet in the meaning and requiring of the Holy Ghost, they do not properly and truly serve God, unless they do confirm all the Words of his Law to do them. The same Spirit doth caution us hereof, and give us to understand as much by what is written, *Ye Ministers of his that do his pleasure*, Psal. 103. 21. Hereby intimating that there are such who think themselves, and are

are called by the World *Ministers*, and *Servants of God*, who yet do not his Pleasure: *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*, Luke 6. 46. And yet more plainly this is signified by what the Spirit saith, *His Servants shall serve him*, Rev. 22. 3 This is brought in upon describing the manner of the *New Jerusalem* above, which herein is opposite and different from that on Earth; for many here are called *Servants of God*, who do not in deed and in truth serve him: Whereas such only, who do in deed and in truth serve him, shall be admitted there. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works; and I will profess unto them, I never knew ye; depart from me, ye that work Iniquity*, Mat. 7. 21, 22, 23.

These things I have written, not that I had ought as of my self to accuse my Nation of; but to manifest from the Word which flatters none, but declares unto all Men what his thoughts and ways are; that though a form of Godliness is spread and diffused throughout the several Congregations and Places of this Island; yet they all come short of the Power and substance thereof. And as we do all look for the appearance of the Great GOD, who shall render to every Man according

ding to his Work, both ye and my self are to be diligent, that we may be found of Him without spot and blameless. I speak not these things as a Man; but they do proceed forth from the Word and Spirit of the Lord, and from Him that gives Man Knowledge; who sees all this, and much more, and is displeased. As Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores are launced in order to a cure; so these things are laid open before all the Churches (which they may at least come to the sight, hearing, or rumour of) that they may know such things have been written, that according to the Commandment of *the God of Israel, they amend their Ways and their Doings, Jer. 7. 3.* if they intend to have the Favour of God now, be accepted of Him at last, and if they would dwell with him in the highest Heavens for evermore. *Amen, saith my Soul; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

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